1:Beals E-5 (1940-1941)1946 NU34 Tarasco NU34

632 652 ment, one to the State treasurer, and one to the general accounting office of the State. The first two deal with income payable to Federal or State government, while the third deals with all the municipal accounts.

UNOFFICIAL ORGANIZATIONS

467 665 The functioning of government in Cherán is often affected by unofficial organizations and informal groups. At the time of the study, the most influential of such groups was one affiliated with the CTM (*Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanas*). Probably this same group also functioned as a local branch of the official government party, the PRM (*Partido Revolucionario Mexicano*).

The actual functioning and organization of these groups was quite informal. Considerable difference of opinion existed in the town as to the desirability of such organizations, many holding that they are disruptive in character. Others, the so-called progressives, felt that such organization is necessary if the town is to receive its fair share of Government aid. Between these conflicting viewpoints could arise violent disagreement. With great reasonableness, however, the "progressives" organized only informally. Those who felt the town should be organized in the fashion mentioned, named officers and got themselves recognized by the State branch of the CTM. When documents arrive which need action or signature, the members of the group talk them over informally in house-to-house visits and send the necessary replies. There are no meetings or overt evidence of the organization. From the standpoint of union and party officials in the State capital, the town is organized; from the standpoint of the majority of the inhabitants of Cherán, it is not.

661 579 The development of this informal organization grew out of another and earlier organization that had gotten the town a bad name. In 1940–41, within a short time any investigator soon heard of the *zafarrancho*, the disorder or riot. Evidently a landmark, many events were dated by reference to this affair. To learn about it, however, was not easy. Many people refused to talk about it at all; others suggested that it was unwise to talk about it. Only after many months was the story finally secured in

1:Beals E-5 (1940-1941)1946 NU34 Tarasco NU34

661 confidential talks, and even then it is doubtful whether all the details were abstracted from
579 unwilling witnesses. The story as learned does not seem to call for all the secrecy involved, and this gives weight to the suspicion that the truth of the underlying factors was not secured and that these factors are more operative today than anyone would admit.

At the height of the agrarian movement in Michoacán, the control of the *municipio* was secured by a group of some 30 men calling themselves "agrarians (*agraristas*)." Everyone seemed agreed that there was no genuine agrarian problem in Cherán and that the members of the group had no desire for land but only for power. Perpetuating themselves in office, members of this group at first were tolerated but gradually became more and more overbearing in their attitude. When people finally began to show signs of discontent, the "agrarians" asked the State authorities for aid on the grounds that the people were rebellious. As a result, a detachment of soldiers was stationed in Cherán under the command of a lieutenant to enforce order and the authority of the municipal officials. The young lieutenant apparently soon saw that his troops were perpetuating an illegal and unpopular group in power and tried to get his superiors to make a real investigation, but with no success. The tyranny of the ruling group now became unbearable.

The climax came when a drunken member of the group began firing his revolver on the main streets and threatening people. One of the soldiers endeavored to arrest the man and was shot and killed. The lieutenant now succeeded in having the situation thoroughly investigated, and as a result the detachment of soldiers was withdrawn. The following day occurred the *zafarrancho*. Some 10 to 12 of the "agrarians" were killed and the rest fled the town. In 1940, they were still living in exile in nearby towns.

664 For a time following this, Cherán was
665 governed by a *presidente militar*, an appointed
467 army officer. Technically, this was true in 1940, but the commander rarely even visited the town and all troops had been removed some time before. The present "progressive" government has effectively been in power since the affair. This is also the group which has

467 665 664 organized the local branch of the CTM, no doubt a factor in securing the withdrawal of the always unpopular military garrison.

159 665 The leader of the progressive group is a man who has not held any official office in the town, Moisés Valenzuela, commander of the *reserva*. An orphan as a child, Valenzuela was aided by a woman he calls his aunt. According to Valenzuela's own story, he left Cherán at 16 and tried to go to the United States. Refused admission for some reason, he fell into bad company and became involved in smuggling liquor across the border during prohibition. Eventually the activities of the group extended to narcotics, Valenzuela was caught and held about 18 months in a Texas jail, after which he was deported. He then entered an army school, learned to read and write and received some further education, eventually becoming some sort of officer. Returning to Cherán during the time of the agrarians, he organized and led the resistance to them, and quite informally arrived in the position of being, as one informant put it, "head man" of Cherán. Locally he is regarded as an influential person over an area extending as far as the State capital, Morelia.

So far as evidence could be found, Valenzuela is an honest man, well-liked in the town. He talked several times of the necessity of going away and earning some money. According to his story, he did not mind giving most of his time for the town, but the time had come when he should look after his wife and children better than he was able to do in Cherán. Certainly he did not live in a pretentious house, and his customary clothing was overalls. His dress, of course, could be assumed for political reasons, but when he made trips to Morelia or Uruapan on community or private business, he certainly dressed little better. It is, of course, quite possible that persons with a different view of Valenzuela were afraid to talk freely. He himself deprecated his position and seemed somewhat amused that the townspeople accorded him as much respect as they did. His own story of his arrest and jail sentence in the United States was told with a somewhat rueful and artless good humor. On the many occasions he was seen with others, he always seemed ready to listen to other points of view and to advance his own without any attempt at domina-

2;Carrasco E-4, 5 (1945)1952
[P.12C] NU34 Tarasco NU34
Pátzcuaro

175 565 some extent they also engaged in manufacturing and trade.

Within this system the Indians comprised a special class or caste under a different system of law which gave them specific duties and protections.

[621] The Indian political units were either kept or rearranged through numerous resettlements and patterned after the Spanish township. These communities, after the contact period of the sixteenth century, with their special type of economy and government, form the immediate background for modern developments.

Within the general economic system of the colony, the rôle of the Indian was that of paying tribute and supplying labor to Spanish enterprise. Every Indian town [651] had to pay a fixed tribute on a per capita basis, for which the whole community was held responsible. It was also the town's re- [467] sponsibility to supply a definite number of laborers to be hired by Spanish entrepreneurs. This type of forced labor with pay was called *repartimiento*, *mita*, or *coatequil*.

Indians who left their communities to work permanently in Spanish enterprises, either as free or debt-bond laborers, mixed with Negroes and whites, forming the so-called *castas*, and usually lost their Indian culture and language.

175 621 Throughout post-Conquest times, Indian communities had a great degree of economic and cultural autonomy, but they never were closed units. They comprised only one of several different types of social units in Mexico (haciendas, mining communities, urban centers) which made up Mexican society.

The Indian communities were called, in Spanish, *pueblos* or *repúblicas de indios* (Indian towns or republics). We will use village community or land-holding village as terms known in sociological literature for similar units in other parts of the world. They are Sorokin's Type 1 of rural communities: "a village community of peasant joint owners."[5]

175 621 565 These communities were to some extent economically self-sufficient but by trading, paying tribute, supplying labor to Spanish enterprise, and losing individuals to the growing free lower classes (*castas*), they

5. Sorokin, 1930, I:300.

7: Kaplan E-5 (1948)1951 NU34 Tarasco NU34
Sierra Tarascans

their more mundane activities. It was therefore with the expectation of a rewarding experience that the annual Corpus Christi fiesta was awaited in the pueblo of Paracho where the author was engaged in anthropological studies during the summer of 1948.

Paracho is a mestizo community of approximately three thousand persons. It is located in the Sierra Region of Michoacán, in the heart of the Tarascan area. The pueblo is approximately half-way between Carapan and Uruapan on the branch of the national highway that connects those towns and is about fifteen miles from each. Although the community is rapidly becoming urbanized it still adheres to many of the old customs—to a diminishing extent, to be sure, as new ways come to supplant them. The performance of the Huanancha dance at the festival of Corpus Christi is one such "survival," but apparently it is coming to have a function somewhat altered from that which it had in early Colonial days.

The church calendar notwithstanding, the fiesta of Corpus Christi is celebrated at different times in the several pueblos of the Sierra Region of Michoacán. This is primarily because a large and continuous market is a cardinal requirement for a successful holiday, and the travelling salesmen, operators of merry-go-rounds, gamblers, clowns, and other personages who help to make the market place a center of attraction for a wide area, cannot be in several places at the same time. In Paracho, Corpus Christi is celebrated on the second Sunday in August and continues for two days. For the community the holiday has three main functions: commercial, religious and recreational. In 1948, the year in which the fiesta in Paracho was observed by the author, the religious aspect appears to have been subordinate. One villager said that no special church ceremonies were held in Paracho that year because the Bishop of Zamorra and the priest had decided that "it was not good for the people because they don't know how to have a nice holiday and they get drunk." The clerics were also reported to have said, "if the people can have a nice holiday then they can have the church ceremonies (on that day) again." There had been special observances on Corpus Christi in 1947, the first year that the present parish priest was in residence.

But it was not only the religious significance of the holiday that was changing in the minds and activities of the people. Other practices associated with the holiday in the past are also receiving less attention than formerly. For example, each trade group—an organization of members who work at the same specialized trade, of which twenty-one are recognized in Paracho—used to hire a "music" (that is, either a band or an orchestra) which followed the group about the town for the two and a half days of the holiday, playing almost all of the time. Each group would vie with the others to get the best "music" and to have their musicians play the longest and the loudest. In 1948 only five of the trade groups hired either bands or orchestras, and a sixth band was provided by the mayor of the town. We were also told that formerly it was the practice of each trade group to set itself up in the plaza on the second day of the holiday and demonstrate for all to see how they worked—making miniature chocolate

7: Kaplan E-5 (1948)1951 NU34 Tarasco NU34
Sierra Tarascans

beaters, *rebosos* or shawls, ponchos, small loaves of bread, and so forth, and giving these away to the bystanders.[1] This custom was not observed in 1948, although we were told that it had been carried on only the year before. Various reasons were given for these lapses. Some said that the people were tired of the old ways and did not want to bother. One possible explanation may rest on the fact that the priest had a large building program under way and the pueblo's new church was about half finished. It may be that the priest did not wish to divert money from his building program by allowing his parishoners to spend it on lavish holiday expenditures. It would seem likely that there would be less money for the church building program if the fiesta were elaborate, but the opposite argument is also plausible. As evidence of this we were told, a month before the fiesta, that the celebration would, "be like in the old times because they (i.e. the church officials) want to raise a lot of money for the church, and they are sure that if they don't have a good 'Corpus' like in the old days then they won't be able to make much money." This person indicated that it was unlikely that anyone would be very generous if he did not have a good time. Nonetheless, the other view evidently prevailed—at least in outward behavior.

As the time for the fiesta approached, many members of the community "played down" the holiday, perhaps to make the event, when it actually took place, seem that much better. It was also repeatedly said that the political upheaval which occurred a few weeks prior to the holiday—the duly elected mayor was ousted from office by the defeated candidate—had divided the town. The result of this was that several of the trade groups chose not to cooperate in "making" the holiday. Despite both the prior maximizing and minimizing of the approaching fiesta, there was plenty of noise and good fun during the holiday.

It was the mayor's band, a group of from fifteen to eighteen brass and woodwind players who were brought to Paracho especially for the occasion as the mayor's contribution to the fiesta, that provided the music for the Huanancha dances. These musicians came by bus from the pueblo of Ichan, one of the so-called "eleven pueblos" on the Morelia-Guadalajara highway, a distance of some eighteen miles from Paracho. It may be possible to infer from the prior anxiety about the success of the holiday, and from the fact that the dancers were asked to participate only three days before the holiday, that the mayor himself feared he would lose status if the fiesta were not at least in some ways as in the old days. This may be the reason that the presentation of the dance was continued, as one means of keeping the good will of the townspeople. This is purely in the realm of conjecture, however.

The dance of the Huanancha maidens is one of the two special dances performed traditionally in Paracho. It is performed on Corpus Christi, on the day

[1] René Barragán y Luis Arturo González Bonilla, "Vida Actual de los Tarascos," in Lucio Mendieta y Nuñez (ed.), *Los Tarascos: Monográfia histórica, etnográfica, y económica* (Mexico, 1940), p. 146. In 1940 the miniature objects were made and then were sold on the following day. "It is said that formerly they did not sell, but that they took them to the church and later threw them away." (Translated from the Spanish).